CUSHOO:

A DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

A Negro and an English Gentleman,

ON

THE HORRORS OF SLAVERY

AND

THE SLAVE TRADE.

There is no flesh in man's obdurate heart,
That does not feel for man. COWPER.

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FOR WILLIAMS AND SMITH, STATIONERS' COURT.
XLI.

ARGUMENT.

A GENTLEMAN, whom we denominate Mr. ENGLISH, is waited on by a Negro, named CUSHOO, lately arrived from Jamaica, where he had been many years slave to a friend of Mr. English. After Mr. E. had enquired respecting his acquaintances in that island, Cushoo endeavours to excite his compassion for his countrymen, the poor Africans, by relating the horrors of the Slave Trade, and the miseries of Slavery *.

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* This is a new edition of a tract, printed many years ago; but which was very soon out of print. It has been materially altered by the Author, to suit the circumstances of the times. Originally it was accompanied by a body of Notes, chiefly taken from the evidence given in the House of Commons; which are omitted here as now unnecessary, and for want of room.

RPJCB

CUSHOO:

A DIALOGUE,

&c. &c.

Mr. English having made enquiry after his Friend; and some conversation having passed, of no importance to be related, Cushoo proceeds: —

Cushoo. Ah! Massa Buckra, pity poor Negroman.

Mr. English. Why, Cushoo, what's the matter?

C. Ah! Massa, poor Negro worse usé den dog: poor Negro bought and sold like cattle; nobody care for poor Negro.

E. Bought and sold! and great reason to thank the whites for buying you, and bringing you from your own rascally country to the fine islands in the West Indies.

C. Great reason indeed, Massa, you killé us with kindness! But, Massa, ours no rascally country, — ours very fine country! — we no work, — we go hunt, — we dance, we sing, — we no quarrel, — we live peace, whité man let us alone.

E. Not quarrel! I thought you were always quarrelling, fighting, killing, and selling one another.

C. What you tink make black man quarrel?

E. Their own cruel and perverse disposition, I suppose.

C. No, Massa; white man's good make black man quarrel.

E. What goods?

C. Brandy, rum, guns, and gunpowder.

E. And what are these wanted for?

C. Brandy and rum make dem drunk and quarrel.

E. But what do they want with guns and gunpowder?

C. Killé one 'nother, and burn towns in de Christian way, Massa.

E. How!

C. Me tell you. When de slave captains come to black man's country, dey send to de black king to buy slaves, — he say, "Me no slaves; but me try get some." Den he say to his war-men, "Go fight; go burn great many towns, and get great many pris'ners." Den dey go, some horseback, some foot; den when night come, dey 'tack town, burn de huts, and carry off de men, women, and pickaninys pris'ners.

E. And is this their usual way of making war and procuring slaves?

C. Yes, Massa; but sometimes great many kill and be made slaves both sides.

E. Then they exchange prisoners, I suppose.

C. O no; slave captain buy one, buy toder, and sometimes take de bringers into de bargain.

E. Then they are properly rewarded. Was you taken in war?

C. No; but poor Yanko was; his broders kill'd in de fight, and his wife and pickaninnys all sold, and sent to 'Merica.

E. You came then, perhaps, in a less honourable way: — for debt, or thieving, adultery, or witchcraft, may be.

C. No, Massa; but some be — but den —

E. Then they wish to escape, I suppose, like other rogues.

C. You sellé all your detters?

E. No; but we leave them sometimes to starve in jail; which is not much better.

C. You sellé witches?

E. We don't believe any thing in witchcraft.

C. No! But you buy dem and all deir families. You sellè all your rogues and 'dulterers?

E. No truly, I don't know where we should find purchasers; yet we sell transports sometimes.

C. May be so: but you no make *Palavers* purpose, and condemn honest men for teifè.

E. Nor your people neither, I hope.

C. Often, Massa, very often. De *Cabasheer* make Palavers to sell poor Negro, dat dey may get de money.

E. What was you sold for?

C. Me taken by *Panyaring*.

E. What's that?

C. Believe you call it *Kidnap*. When me boy, me and sister *Ora* set to watch some corn-fields, and drive away de birds. Then come two Moors; one take me, one take Ora, put us in two sacks and take us down to de slave ship.

E. Then you were sold, I suppose.

C. Slave captain buy us for Jamaica.

E. You had a comfortable voyage I hope; I have been told you are always very merry.

C. You hear, Massa: when we put board ship, we all hand cuff and fetter two by two, den dey stow us in de hold as close as staves in de hogshead.

E. But you sing and dance sometimes for all that.

C. Yes; sometime captain say, "Sing," den we make lamentation.

E. But what makes you dance?

C. O de cat-o'nine-tails; dat make any body dance.

E. You have proper food allowed.

C. Dey no mind dat — some no eat.

E. What does the captain then?

C. O he find way to cure sulky Negro.

E. What?

C. Give dem red-hot coal to eat.

E. A fine relish truly! and do they eat them?

C. No; sooner eat yam and horsebean.

E. And is that their usual method?

C. Sometime cut one Negro in pieces, and make oder Negro eat him.

E. So they make them all eat?

C. No; sometimes sooner die.

E. But I should imagine there might be more danger on the other hand of wanting food or water, if the passage happened to be a little longer than usual.

C. O dat nothing, Massa; den dey make dem *walk de plank.*

E. What's that?

C. Make dem jump in de sea.

E. Poor creatures!

C. O dey glad of dat, Massa!

E. What to be drown'd?

C. O yes; den dey tink to go to deir own country.

E. And are they often so desperate?

C. Yes, Massa, very often; de captain sometimes 'blig'd take great care, else dey all jump over.

E. Do they take any young children?

C. Good many long with deir mothers.

E. And are not they very troublesome?

C. O slave-captain cure all.

E. How?

C. If dey make much noise trow them overboard; and if dey sulky and no eat, whip dem to dead wid de cat.

E. Horrid! but what do they with the sick?

C. All put togeder — sometime slave doctor cure dem, but very often die. Me wake one morning, found my mate chain'd to me dead.

E. Dreadful! but you got safe into port; what came of your sister?

C. O poor Ora, safe too; den we sold.

E. And were you both bought by the same master?

C. O no: poor Ora sold to 'noder massa, — she go good way off, — poor Ora cry; but me never see her no more.

E. Do they often part so near relations?

C. O dey no mind dat; — dey part moder and

pickaninny, — husband and wife, — broder and sister, — ah! me no bear tink; it break my heart.

E. I thought you blacks had no such fine feelings.

C. Me beg your pardon, Massa, dat be de whites; — de blacks all feel.

E. And they have a difficulty to part you sometimes I reckon?

C. De curst wip do dat, Massa.

E. You had the luck to meet with a good master, however.

C. Dey say, my Massa good Massa.

E. And what did he set you to do?

C. De Overseer, after he mark us wid red hot iron, send me and good many more to de gang to de *seasoning*.

E. Seasoning! What's that?

C. O dey call de two first years de seasoning, den if we live, dey call us good slave.

E. Does it kill any of you then?

C. Great many, Massa.

E. What sort of work did they set you to?

C. Me field-slave; me work in de field a-day, and sometimes tend de mills at night.

E. Is your work very hard?

C. Very hard, Massa, and work great many hours; but Negro no mind dat, so usè well and feedè well.

E. What do you live on?

C. Rice, horsebeans, and sometimes stinking fish; what whitè no eat, he give blackè.

E. Well; with all you hardships, your must acknowledge you are better off than in your own barbarous country, full of lions and tygers.

C. But there be no Negro driver, Massa!

E. Keep in bounds, Cushoo; you know in your own country you live under barbarous and petty tyrants, in a wild uncivilized state; but in the West Indies you are brought to a civilized state, and live under the protection of our gracious sovereign King George.

C. God bless King George! dey say he be very good man.

E. A very good man, a good king, and well belov'd by his subjects.

C. Den he no serve you as our king serve us in Negro-land.

E. O no; we live in a land of liberty; — Englishmen love liberty, and have often spilt their blood to maintain it.

C. Love liberty! ah! dat be reckoned very good ting in England. But dey roast and burn us for dat in the West Indies.

E. Rebellion you mean, I suppose, and revolt.

C. Aye! it be de same ting: blackè man want be free like whitè man.

E. But you are blacks, you know.

C. And you be white, Massa, ha! ha! What odds dat make we all broder.

E. But we are Christians.

C. Christians! ah curse, swear, lye, whore, get drunk; — suppose dat be Christian.

E. How! what d'ye mean?

C. Dat be de religion dey teach us.

E. O but our Bible don't allow any such things.

C. But den you no believe it; so dat no signify.

E. Fye, Cushoo, fye! you're too severe.

C. Me wish whitè man no more severe.

E. Severe! you refer to punishments I suppose. What are the punishments of slaves?

C. What Massa Overseer please.

E. But what are the most usual?

C O when we do little, nothing, dey den only fasten us to de crane, or to de ground, and flog us wid de cart whip, or de ebony bush.

E. Suppose you steal?

C. Den dey only whipè us most dead, may be.

E. But if you revolt or run away?

C. Den dey roast, burn, starve, or cuttè us to pieces.

E. What do they do when you are worn out, and past labour?

C. O den dey give us free, and so we may lie 'bout and starve to dead; or may be good-natured, hangè us like poor old Quasheba.

E. But there are laws, you know, for you, as well as them.

C. O dey no mind laws. Whitè man no hang one 'noder, and dey no mind what blackè man say.

E. But you are very cruel.

C. Blackè hurt no whitè, whitè hurt no blackè.

E. And they do you no harm if you don't injure them.

C. Massa, mè axè you von question.

E. Well.

C. Suppose 'noder man lay wid your wife, — dat no harm?

E. Certainly it is.

C. Suppose 'noder man cruel beatè your wife and pickaninnys, — dat no harm?

E. I could not bear it.

C. Suppose dey make you work hard, live hard, and beat hard in de bargain.

E. I could never endure it.

C. Den why poor Negro bear all dis?

E. I'm very sorry; but you are out of it all now, Cushoo, so never mind it. Farewell! I am tired of the subject.

C. But me tell à you good many quessons, Massa; now tell à me two tre.

E. Be quick then.

C. Supposè you broder or sister, wife or pickaninny in Algier?

E. Thank God I have not.

C. But if you had, you forget dem?

E. Hardly.

C Den, why tell a me forget my poor black kin? O no! me never forget, — no, never!

E. Well, Cushoo, I have some good news, however, for you; the British Parliament seem agreed to put an end to these miseries as soon as possible.

C. Good news indeed, Massa! O dat I might live to see de day!

E. In the mean time, I hope, that the friends of religion and mankind will exert themselves for the conversion of your countrymen, both at home and in the colonies.

C. Conversion! what dat mean, Massa?

E. To make them good Christians.

C. Christians, Massa! God forbid that blackè man should be like Christian!

E. What do you mean? You judge, I suppose, by our Jamaica Christian.

C. Me know no other Christian.

E. Did you never hear of the Christian blacks in Jamaica?

C. Christian blacks! Ah, but my Massa say, dat was very bad; for if poor Negro made Christian, den poor Negro want be free, and run away. So my Massa never let me go 'mong dem.

E. But you are now in a Christian country, and you may hear the gospel, without control.

C. Hear gospel, Massa! dat make Christian?

E. I must stand corrected there, Cushoo; I do not mean hearing *only*; I mean to hear and practise it.

C. As dey do in Jamaica, Massa; drink, lie, swear, whore!

E. Fye, fye, Cushoo! I tell you our religion allows of no such conduct; no, not even in desire or thought.

C. God à mercy den on Christians? for me know no oder in Jamaica!

E. Can you read, Cushoo?

C. Ah no, Massa; my Jamaica Massa no let à me learn dat;—but me begin now;—good Massa where me lodge teach à me.

E. What does he teach you to read?

C. Me only just begin, Massa; — but he say he will teach à me to read good book, — and take à me to hear good preacher.

E. I am glad of that, Cushoo; and when you can read a little, come to me and I will give you a Bible. In the mean time, here is a little Tract (giving him the Converted Negro*, &c.) and get somebody to read it to you; — and may God make you as good and as happy as he was!

C. Tankè, Massa, tankè, — you be good Massa!

Cushoo withdraws, and Mr. English takes up Cowper's Task *and reads* (Book II.) *as follows:*

Oh for a lodge in some vast wilderness,
Some boundless contiguity of shade,
Were rumour of oppression and deceit,
Of unsuccessful or successful war,
Might never reach me more. My ear is pained,
My soul is sick, with every day's report
Of wrong and outrage with which earth is filled.
There is no flesh in man's obdurate heart:
It does not feel for man; the natural bond
Of brotherhood is severed as the flax,
That falls asunder at the touch of fire.
He finds his fellow guilty of a skin
Not coloured like his own! and having power
To enforce the wrong, for such a worthy cause
Dooms and devotes him as a lawful prey.
Lands intersected by a narrow frith
Abhor each other. Mountains interposed
Make enemies of nations, who had else,
Like kindred drops, been mingled into one.
Thus man devotes his brother, and destroys;
And, worse than all, and most to be deplored,
As human nature's broadest, foulest blot,

* One of the tracts in the Cottage Library, and very suitable to be given to Africans.

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Chains him, and tasks him, and exacts his sweat
With stripes, that Mercy with a bleeding heart
Weeps when she sees inflicted on a beast!
Then what is man? And what man, seeing this,
And having human feelings, does not blush,
And hang his head, to think himself a man?
I would not have a slave to till my ground,
To carry me, to fan me while I sleep,
And tremble when I wake, for all the wealth
That sinews bought and sold have ever earned.
No: dear as freedom is, and in my heart's
Just estimation prized above all price,
I had much rather be myself the slave,
And wear the bonds, than fasten them on him.
We have no slaves at home.—Then why abroad?
And they themselves once ferried over the wave,
That parts us, are emancipate and loosed.
Slaves cannot breathe in England. If their lungs
Receive our air, that moment they are free;
They touch our country, and their shackles fall.
That is noble, and bespeaks a nation proud
And jealous of the blessing. Spread it then,
And let it circulate through every vein
Of all your empire; that where Britain's power
Is felt, mankind may feel her mercy too.

COWPER.

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